

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:

electronically receiving new ownership information about at least one item to be physically transferred to a new owner;

electronically registering ownership of said at least one item to said new owner; and

when requested, providing verification that an entity selling an item of interest is registered as the owner of said item.

2. The method according to claim 1 and wherein said electronic transferring comprises communicating along a substantially secure communications line.

3. The method according to claim 1 and also comprising having a unique article number assigned to each said at least one item.

4. The method according to claim 3 and also comprising having said unique article number encoded.

5. The method according to claim 3 and also comprising having said unique article number encoded as a bar code.

6. The method according to claim 1 and wherein said entity is a store.

7. A method comprising:

Registering ownership of at least one item when said at least one item is physically transferred to a new owner;

receiving an item identification code associated with an item to be verified from a possible owner; and

generating a certificate of authenticity of said item to be verified if said item identification code is registered to said possible owner.

8. The method according to claim 7 and wherein said item identification code comprises a unique article number assigned to each said at least one item.

9. The method according to claim 7 and wherein said possible owner comprises a store.

10. The method according to claim 7 and wherein said receiving comprises communicating along a substantially secure communications line.

11. A counterfeit detection method comprising:

reading a label on an item; and

providing a certificate of authenticity of said item if an identification code encoded in said label and identifying said item is registered by a third party authority to a store from which said item was bought.

12. The method according to claim 11 and wherein said electronically reading comprises scanning said label with a bar code reader.

13. The method according to claim 11 and wherein said identification code is one of the following code types: one-dimensional bar code, two-dimensional bar code, RFID tag and a magnetic tag.

14. The method according to claim 11 and wherein said providing occurs at said store.

15. A counterfeit detection method comprising:

in a store, electronically reading a label on a desired item;

transmitting an item identification code encoded in said read label to an authentication unit;

receiving an indication from said authentication unit whether or not said item identification code is registered to said store; and

if said indication is positive, generating a certificate of authenticity for said desired item.

16. The method according to claim 15 and wherein said electronically reading comprises scanning said label with a bar code reader.

17. The method according to claim 15 and wherein said identification code is one of the following code types: one-dimensional bar code, two-dimensional bar code, RFID tag and a magnetic tag.

18. An apparatus comprising:

a storage unit to store information about authentic items and their authorized owners;

and

a unit to receive queries regarding an item and a holder of said item and to provide verification of authenticity of said item, if said holder is registered in said storage unit as the authorized owner of said item.

19. The apparatus of claim 18 and also comprising an update unit to register a change in said authorized owner.

20. The apparatus of claim 18 and also comprising a communications unit to communicate with said owners along a substantially secure communications line.

21. A point of sale unit capable of communicating said queries to the apparatus of claim 18.

22. A point of sale unit comprising:

a reader to read a label attached to an item; and

a unit to query an authentication unit to certify that the authorized owner of said item is the owner registered in said point of sale unit.

23. The unit according to claim 22 and also comprising a display unit to display verification or denial of authenticity, according to results of said query.

24. The unit according to claim 22 and also comprising a printer to print a certificate of authenticity, if said results of said query are positive.

25. The unit according to claim 22 and wherein said reader comprises one of the following readers: a one-dimensional bar code reader, a two-dimensional bar code reader, an RFID tag reader, and a magnetic tag reader.